



For Immediate Release:

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Best Friends For Life: Keep Yourself and Your Pet Healthy to Ensure a Long Future Together

Obesity is now the biggest health threat to pets in the U.S.

LOS ANGELES – If you own a pet, staying healthy should be a team effort. This week Los Angeles County Public Health observes National Pet Week, reminding residents that healthy habits can ensure that you and your pet have many happy years together.

“The next time your dog begs you to take him on a walk, recognize it as an opportunity for the both of you to get some exercise,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “When you’re scheduling your next doctor’s visit, remember that your cat might need a check-up at the vet. And make sure everyone in your household – human and animal – enjoys reasonable portions of nutritious foods.”

People and pets today are at a high risk of obesity and obesity-related illnesses. Nearly two-thirds of all adult Americans are overweight or obese, while 44 percent of dogs and 57 percent of cats nationwide are overweight. With an estimated 1.98 million dogs and 2.23 million cats currently living in LA County, this means that potentially hundreds of thousands of animals are at risk. Their added pounds increase their chances of suffering from associated health problems commonly seen in overweight humans, including osteoarthritis, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and cancer.

“Pets become overweight the same way that people do: over-eating, consuming high-calorie foods, and not exercising,” Dr. Fielding said. “Fortunately, obesity is preventable, treatable, and reversible. Starting can be as simple as making time to play with your cat or going for a run or a walk with your dog. You will both de-stress and can get great exercise without even realizing it.”

Further information about animal health issues can be found on the Veterinary Public Health website at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/index.htm> or on the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention’s website at www.petobesityprevention.com.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

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